

San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee Minutes for May 11, 2006

Sacramento, California

Item 1 - Call to Order and Announcements

Chair Harvey Hall called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m. After group introductions, Supervisor Illa Collin welcomed everyone to Sacramento County. She discussed how growing numbers of travelers through Sacramento's Intermodal Transportation Facility (the historic Southern Pacific station) resulted in extension of light rail transit into this location as well as various other improvements. After her request for visitors to advise City of Sacramento officials with suggestions on how to make getting around town easier, the supervisor announced Capitol Corridor ridership got the attention of City Council members. Since Supervisor Collin will not be running for another term, she has been trying to recruit her replacement on the San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee (SJVRC) among the City's elected representatives. She said that observing the involvement of many people in the growth of the *San Joaquins* has been a great experience. Speaking of on a recent cross-country Amtrak trip, she observed the need to make a big push for rail in this country and that operating railroads could use help in bringing trains up to international standards.

Mayor Hall thanked Supervisor Collin for many years of service to the SJVRC, including lobbying efforts for direct *San Joaquin* trains to Sacramento.

Item 2 - Public Comments

Sacramento Regional Transit Mobility Advisory Council representative Mike Barnbaum talked about a statewide \$19.9 billion transportation bond on the November 2006 ballot (part of a larger infrastructure initiative). He said that rolling stock was the biggest need.

Mr. Barnbaum also suggested extending more trips to the station at McAfee Coliseum for Oakland Raiders football games. He noted that this baseball season was the first year Capitol Corridor partnered with the A's, who play at McAfee, too.

Item 3 - Guest Speakers

A. California Operation Lifesaver

Zoé Richmond rescheduled her presentation until the September 14th meeting.

B. BNSF Railway Company (BNSF)

D. J. Mitchell spoke about improving conditions on the railroad. Currently, only one minute of slow orders were in effect north of Bakersfield on the BNSF. The on-time performance between Sacramento and Bakersfield has also resulted in trains running 5-6 minutes early. He said days of suffering significant delays were over. Union Pacific Railroad was also to be complimented because completion of its trackwork between Stockton and Sacramento has helped to keep the San Joaquin Corridor running as a team effort.

Mr. Mitchell then introduced Steve Graham of Wabtec Railway Electronics, a company working on the next generation of emergency train management systems (ETMS). Mr. Graham delivered a PowerPoint presentation and showed a video on improvements BNSF will be rolling out in the near future. (An electronic copy of this information on CD-ROM may be requested from the SJVRC Secretary or Rick Depler at BNSF).

Mr. Graham then fielded questions from the SJVRC members. Ty Holscher asked how this ETMS could change train speed. The response was that Class IV track standards currently set at a maximum 79 mph would still apply for passenger trains. To go faster, automatic train stop capability is required. Larry Miller inquired about any security vulnerabilities. Mr. Graham said that the wireless signals were encrypted to Federal Railroad Administration standards and that someone could more likely interfere with the current infrastructure than this one. Howard Abelson requested a ballpark cost for installing this system per track mile, which is \$300,000 (compared to \$3 million for a Centralized Traffic Control). Mr. Graham qualified his answer by saying that comparisons were not exact because each system offered some different features, and he added that ETMS costs \$20,000-25,000 per locomotive and \$10,000 for a wayside unit. Art Lloyd asked whether or not ETMS would accommodate train speeds up to 90 mph. D. J. Mitchell said, "We have not gone down that path because ETMS was not the same as an automatic train stop." Mr. Graham indicated that the ETMS technology was going in that direction though.

Item 4 - Action Items

A. Minutes of the March 9, 2006 meeting in Fresno (Annual Meeting)

The 12 members present unanimously approved these minutes.

B. Resolution on Fresno-Visalia-Bakersfield service

Mr. Holscher opened discussion of this resolution by acknowledging Technical Advisory Committee revisions and recommendations. He expressed concern about feasibility study funding from local/regional agencies. Mr. Miller concurred and suggested two additional points: (1) making a general statement of support rather than specifically directing the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), (2) waiting until the SJVRC has a meeting in that region and then bring this item for discussion at that time so that more interested people could participate.

Some dialogue ensued among the members about funding regional transportation desires, and how so-called "self help" counties with dedicated revenue sources for mobility improvements have been better able to reach their objectives.

Art Lloyd and Bruce Heard noted that the SJVRC Technical Advisory Committee members discussed this resolution at length and based recommendations upon the Coast Coordinating Council model, which divides the cost of exploring additional passenger rail service among four counties. They also said that Union Pacific and

Caltrans could be brought into the picture to help determine feasibility before any money is spent.

The SJVRC tabled further discussion until the September 14th meeting in Merced.

Item 5 - Discussion Items

A. Idea for San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee Mission Statement

Mr. Heard expressed interest in developing long-term goals and objectives for the SJVRC and perhaps will raise this issue again at some future meetings.

B. Initiate a statewide discussion on suggested changes to provisions of SB-804

Eric Schatmeier followed up the written staff report provided to the SJVRC members by explaining that, under current law, Caltrans is prohibited from offering intercity bus service but instead provides a “feeder” motorcoach network that complements State-funded passenger trains. However, State-sponsored buses are required to cover operating costs from passenger fares. Higher fuel prices and other rising expenses have made cost recovery more difficult. So the suggested changes attempt to avoid cuts in service. The spirit of this resolution is to preserve existing service.

Supervisor Collin and Mr. Barnbaum talked about elimination of various stops by Greyhound and encouraged members and local agencies to “pursue this issue very vigorously.”

Mr. Miller asked about integrating with service providers other than Greyhound. Mr. Schatmeier answered that Caltrans and Amtrak were working on a variety of ticketing options, so other agencies can sell certain kinds of tickets. Mr. Miller further suggested that raising awareness of the successful free transfer agreement with public transit operators.

Item 6 - Reports

A. Marketing Update

Carol Shannon of Amtrak provided an update on the spring advertising campaign. Disney “family characters” visited with kids riding *San Joaquin* trains on May 6. The new website for Spanish-literate travelers—espanol.amtrak.com—averaged 500 hits and \$1,000 in bookings each day. Amtrak.com now features access from PDA/cellphone devices (no visuals—info is text-only). She also announced the recent debut of an interactive online route map and welcomed comments that address any bugs. Mr. Barnbaum and Ms. Shannon then discussed availability of Amtrak logo merchandise online.

B. Amtrak California Corridor Report

Lou Bellotti introduced himself as the Assistant Superintendent for San Joaquin Corridor operations—an appointment that replaces Patrick Preusser. He corroborated Mr. Mitchell's earlier report of on-time performance. Besides improvements to in-route running times, initial terminal revenue and ridership increased. Mr. Bellotti also said that Amtrak Thruway buses now make timely connections from late *Pacific Surfliners* because Train 703 departs Bakersfield 30 minutes later.

Chair Hall reminded all regular presenters to provide written reports in advance whenever possible.

C. Caltrans Division of Rail Report and State Budget Concerns/Update

Patrick Merrill spoke on Bill Bronte's behalf. He elaborated on the \$19+ billion bond measure before the voters in November. Mr. Merrill said that organizations like the American Automobile Association (AAA) as well as councils of governments statewide are strongly in favor of the measure, which includes a \$400 million provision for Caltrans intercity rail, with \$125 million specifically identified for rolling stock. He explained that without additional passenger coaches and locomotives, service expansion would be almost impossible, and the State anticipates leveraging these dollars for additional federal funding resources. Caltrans staff already met with manufacturer representatives to discuss possible costs and equipment design because no vendor currently has the capability to produce intercity passenger rail equipment in North America. If voters approve this bond measure, California Transportation Commission members have until December 1, 2006, to develop program guidelines that include performance measurement goals. Caltrans expects to meet tight project delivery deadlines set by the State's executive administration.

Mr. Merrill concluded by noting that \$275 million in unfunded projects had been recently identified on the three State-supported routes, in addition to the potential Coast Corridor. He added that full funding for intercity rail operations remained consistent though, with hopes for some additional funding in the 2007-08 budget.

Chair Hall asked for capsule reviews of pending legislation to be provided for the SJVRC, which Mr. Merrill and Mr. Lloyd agreed to furnish from other agencies.

D. Amtrak Federal Update

Jonathan Hutchison of Amtrak introduced himself as the new Government Affairs Director on the west coast then distributed a written summary of ridership/revenue. In addition, he mentioned an Amtrak initiative to work with mayors for improving on-time performance over the next few months.

Supervisor Collin thanked him for these reports and asked several questions about rolling stock plans, particularly long-distance trains. Mr. Hutchison described how Amtrak was bringing its entire fleet to a state of good repair accomplished in conjunction with a fleet planning exercise.

She also complimented the quality and morale of on-board employees, especially during her recent trip to Chicago. These employees help mitigate problems that cannot be controlled otherwise. Mr. Hutchison replied that 25 managers have been hired to provide training and mentoring to on-board service personnel. Mr. Schatmeier said that his staff administers regular train monitoring as well. Mayor Hall and Supervisor Waterston also related several positive experiences with train crews.

Item 7 - Committee Member Concerns

Stacey Mortensen passed along a concern from commuter rail operators that could impact intercity trains. In response to the Metrolink accident in Glendale on January 25, 2005, the local Assemblyman Dario Frommer has proposed pending legislation attached to another bill to ban “cab forward” operations as dangerous. Art Lloyd described a “furor fed by the media” that determined diesel locomotives would be safer in front of commuter trains. Altamont Commuter Express and Caltrain officials have countered that cab cars fully comply with Federal Railroad Administration buffer requirements and are just as safe.

Mr. Lloyd and Ms. Mortensen requested support from State Senator Ray Ashburn of Bakersfield to prevent approval of the Frommer bill in the Senate Transportation Committee. Chairman Hall said that he would follow through with a letter of opposition (please see attached).

Mayor Hall then asked about reasons why “Kids N’ Trains” ridership increased by 2200. Mr. Schatmeier said that Caltrans always looks for ways to market this program, such as school district outreach, education fairs, sending speakers to meet with youth directors, repeat participation from prior years, etc. A program of differential fares for September-February had made a difference, too.

Future Meetings

The group decided to convene in Merced on September 14, 2006, rather than Stockton.

Adjournment in memory of Congressman McFall, who was instrumental in securing federal funding of San Joaquin service in 1974.

The meeting concluded at 3:26 p.m.



REPRESENTING COUNTIES ALONG THE ROUTE OF THE SAN JOAQUINS

*Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, Madera
Merced, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare*

May 30, 2006

The Honorable Roy Ashburn
State Senate District 18
State Capitol Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Ashburn:

Assemblyman Frommer has pending legislation relative to the use of push-pull (cab) cars on California commuter trains. This is a result of the tragic accident in Glendale on January 25, 2005, involving a Metrolink commuter train, an SUV on the tracks, and the resulting deaths of 11 passengers and crew members.

Studies by the Federal Railroad Administration and state safety people have shown that operating in the "push" mode with the locomotive on the rear is equally as safe as with the locomotive in the "pull" mode. The cab car has the same or equal buffer strength as the locomotive.

Although the proposed legislation would only apply to California commuter operations, it could be extended to the inter-city trains such as our own San Joaquins, the Capitol Corridor, and the Pacific Surfliner services.

As Chairman of the San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee, I would urge you to hold off on this bill until more definitive studies can be made. Commuter operations in the New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Chicago areas all use "push-pull" with no deleterious occurrences.

Our committee facilitator, Arthur Lloyd, is a veteran railroader and will be more than happy to provide more details. He can be reached at 20 Arapahoe Court, Portola Valley, CA 94028, (650)851-0998, arthurlloyd@webtv.net.

Of course, I can be reached at City Hall, 1501 Truxtun Avenue, Bakersfield, CA 93301, (661)326-3770, mayor@bakersfieldcity.us.

Best wishes and thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully yours,

Harvey L. Hall
Chairman

HLH/ndw



SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY RAIL COMMITTEE
MAY 11, 2006
Sacramento

NAME	REPRESENTING	E-MAIL*	PHONE #*
Michael Snyder	Howard County		
Tom Bailey	F.A.R.R.C.		
Jim NEWHOF	T.I.E.		
Stacy Mortensen	ACE / SJRR		
Howard PERSON	CONTRA COST		
Bill Kerby	Rail PAC		
LOW Bellotti	AMTRAK		
Russ Jackson	Rail PAC		
Sam Modelhead	LA County		
Alan C. Miller	TRAC		
Tom Sponsler	TRAC AMTRAK		

* NOTE THESE ITEMS MAY BE RELEASED. IF YOU DO NOT WANT



SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY RAIL COMMITTEE
MAY 11, 2006
Sacramento

NAME	REPRESENTING	E-MAIL*	PHONE #*
Clifford W. Sampson			
DJ Mitchell	BNSF		
CAROL SHANNON	Amtrak		
Jonathan Hutchinson	Amtrak		
RICK DEPLER	BNSF		
BRUCE HEARD	L.A. COUNTY		
Dorcas Briggs	—		
GREILS PIRIE	HOST ASSOC. OF CALIF		
Ken Moslem	TRAC		
CATHY CROSBY	Fresno County		
BRUCE JENKINS	RAIL PAC		
Mike Barnbaum	MAC of the SRTD		

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SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY RAIL COMMITTEE
MAY 11, 2006
Sacramento

NAME	REPRESENTING	E-MAIL*	PHONE #*
ANGELO LAMAS	MERCED CO		
JOHN PEDROZO	MERCED COUNTY		
LARRY MILLER	FRESNO CO		
TY HOLSCHER	TULARE CO		
HARVEY HALL	KERN		
ILLA COLLIN	Sacramento County		

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SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY RAIL COMMITTEE
MAY 11, 2006
Sacramento

NAME	REPRESENTING	E-MAIL*	PHONE #*
Kirk Schneider	Caltrans Dist 3	Kirk.Schneider@Caltrans.ca.gov	916.227.1500

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SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY RAIL COMMITTEE
ROLL CALL FOR
May 11, 2006
Sacramento

MEMBER NAME	REPRESENTING	HERE
BART Director TOM BLALOCK	ALAMEDA	
MICHAEL SNYDER	ALAMEDA	ü
Supvr. MARY PIEPHO	CONTRA COSTA	
HOWARD ABELSON	CONTRA COSTA	ü
Supvr. JOHN GIOIA (alt)	CONTRA COSTA	
Supvr. BOB WATERSTON (Past Chair)	FRESNO	ü
LARRY MILLER	FRESNO	ü
Supvr. MICHAEL RUBIO	KERN	
Mayor HARVEY HALL (Chair)	KERN	ü
Supvr. DON MABEN (alt)	KERN	
Supvr. ALENE TAYLOR	KINGS	
RICHARD HAUCK	KINGS	
SAM ABDELHADI (alt for Supvr. Mike Antonovich)	LOS ANGELES	ü
BRUCE HEARD	LOS ANGELES	ü
Supvr. MAX RODRIGUEZ	MADERA	
SARAH ROSS	MADERA	
Supvr. JOHN PEDROZO (Vice Chair)	MERCED	ü
ANGELO LAMAS	MERCED	ü
Supvr. KATHLEEN CROOKHAM (alt)	MERCED	
Supvr. ILLA COLLIN	SACRAMENTO	ü
CAMERON BEACH	SACRAMENTO	
Supvr. LEROY ORNELLAS	SAN JOAQUIN	
STACEY MORTENSEN	SAN JOAQUIN	ü
Supvr. JIM DEMARTINI	STANISLAUS	
GEORGE GAEKLE	STANISLAUS	
Supvr. WILLIAM O'BRIEN (alt)	STANISLAUS	
Supvr. CONNIE CONWAY	TULARE	
TY HOLSCHER	TULARE	ü
ART LLOYD	FACILITATOR	ü

Total voting members present: 12